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£JAPAN

@Urgent Appeal Following Reported Execution

1 DECEMBER 1994

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On 1 December AJIMA Yukio, aged 44, is reported to have been executed in Tokyo Detention Centre, the first execution of 1994. A convicted murderer, he had been under sentence of death for 16 years. In line with usual policy, the Japanese Government has refused to give official confirmation of his execution.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment. It has called on the Japanese Government to commute all death sentences and abolish the death penalty. It is also concerned at the excessive secrecy surrounding executions in Japan.

On 25 November the government published the results of an opinion poll showing that the majority of the public favoured retention of the death penalty. Amnesty International is now concerned that the government may use this result to justify further executions before the end of the year.

Seven men were executed during 1993, more than in any year since 1976 and 58 are now believed to be under finalized sentence of death. They include four prisoners who have been under sentence of death for over 20 years.

Executions in Japan are carried out in secret, by order of the Minister of Justice. They are not announced to the family or lawyer of the prisoner concerned and prisoners

themselves may only be informed a few hours before the execution takes place. The Ministry of Justice does not release the names of executed prisoners and always refuses to confirm or deny that an execution has taken place.

Conditions for prisoners under sentence of death are believed to be harsh. Many are held in solitary confinement and are denied access to anyone except selective relatives and their lawyer. Ajima Yukio had filed a lawsuit against the state for denying him access to his adoptive parent.

The abolitionist movement in Japan has gained momentum over the past few years. Supporters include a former Supreme Court judge, a former Minister of Justice, lawyers and a growing number of parliamentarians. A trend in recent years towards abolition now appears to have been reversed. Although there were no executions between late 1989 and 1993, there have been eight executions since then.

URGENT APPEALS REQUESTED:

Please send letters and faxes to the Japanese Government:

- ◆ expressing concern about the reported execution of Ajima Yukio on 1 December and urging the government not to order any further executions;
- ◆ stating Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment;
- ◆ urging the commutation of all death sentences and abolition of the death penalty;
- ◆ expressing concern about the excessive secrecy surrounding the death penalty in Japan and urging the authorities to officially confirm this latest execution.

Appeals to:

Mr Maeda Isao, Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3592 7011

Mr Murayama Tomiichi, Prime Minister

Office of the Prime Minister
1-6 Nagata-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3581 3883

Copies to:

Asahi Daily
5-3-2 Tsukiji 5-chome
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-11, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3545 0285

Yomiuri Daily
1-7-1 Ohtemachi, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-55, Japan
Fax: +81 3 3246 0455

- ◆ and to diplomatic representatives of Japan in your country.

This appeal is being sent to KOTARAN coordinators and to Japan action file groups for quick appeals.

KEYWORDS: EXECUTION /

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